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VEGETABLES

SPRING ACREAGE (April, May, June, July)



April 7, 2003

FLORIDA

WEATHER: January 2003 brought significant rains to most localities during the first week with most areas receiving from one to two inches, except for the southeastern coast and extreme southern Peninsula which remained dry. Cold temperatures crept over the Peninsula during the first full week and stayed for most of the month bringing hard freezes and frosts as far south as the Everglades near the end of the month. Dry conditions for most of the month increased the danger for wildfires. Strawberry growers ran overhead sprinklers to form ice caps on plants as protection from the cold which saved some immature fruit and most plants. The freezing temperatures caused damage to some vegetables, especially in the Everglades region, with some minor supply shortages occurring and some acreage abandoned. Vegetable harvesting continued throughout January with snap beans, cabbage, celery, cilantro, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, miscellaneous herbs, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and a very light supply of carrots marketed.

Cool temperatures during the first half of February slowed the development of vegetables while dry, windy conditions lowered soil moisture supplies. Significant rains fell around mid-month and at the end. These showers replenished soil moisture in most northern and central Peninsula and most Panhandle localities but left some central and most southern Peninsula areas dry. Temperatures warmed during the last half

of February which boosted vegetable growth, especially in central and southern Peninsula localities. Potato digging started in the southern Peninsula about mid-month.

During March, storms reduced the quality and yield prospects of some vegetables. Soggy soils slowed potato digging and caused some rot in some fields with most acreage adequately draining off the excess moisture. The wet fields slowed the preparation of land for watermelon and other vegetable planting in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. Cabbage cutting neared the usual seasonal peak in mid-March as growers met the increased demand for the St. Patrick's Day holiday. Drier conditions for most of the month around Palmetto-Ruskin, Immokalee and Homestead permitted vegetable planting and harvesting to proceed with few delays. Strawberry picking slowed about mid-month as supplies from other States increased. Some snap bean growers stopped picking due to a poor market. Cold temperatures at the end of March singed some tender foliage in northern areas with most plants recovering well.

This report reflects conditions as of April 1 and represents acreage for harvest during the spring months of April, May, June, and July.

UNITED STATES

The prospective area for harvest of 11 selected fresh market vegetables during the spring quarter is forecast at 217,100 acres, up 2 percent from last year. Acreage decreases for snap beans, carrots, and head lettuce were more than offset by acreage increases for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, sweet corn, cucumbers, bell peppers, and tomatoes. Celery acreage remained the same. Melon acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 78,800 acres, up 1 percent from last year's comparable States. Cantaloup acreage is up 2 percent from a year ago. Honeydew acreage is unchanged. Watermelon acreage is down 1 percent from comparable States in 2002. Asparagus acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 59,000 acres, down 11 percent from last year. Strawberry acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 33,700 acres, up 4 percent from comparable States in 2002.

SNAP BEANS: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 23,000 acres, down 4 percent from last year. **Florida growers are harvesting the winter acreage and will soon start on the spring crop. No major problems have been reported although some growers stopped picking around mid-March due to low prices.** In Georgia, rains slowed land preparation and delayed spring planting. Growers expect to harvest fewer acres this spring.

CABBAGE: Acreage for spring harvest is forecast at 7,200 acres, up 1 percent from last year. **Florida's crop is progressing well with no major problems reported.** In Georgia, rains and wet soil slowed field preparations and delayed spring planting in many areas. Growing conditions for the early cabbage crop in New Jersey are favorable with recent mild temperatures and adequate topsoil moisture. Texas growers are having a very good season. Harvest began in some areas and crop quality is excellent.

SWEET CORN: Intended acreage for harvest is forecast at 38,000 acres, up 3 percent from last year's acreage. The Califor-

nia crop is doing very well and harvest in the Imperial Valley is expected to begin in early April, two weeks ahead of schedule. **In Florida, mostly warm, wet weather prompted good growth and ear development.**

CUCUMBERS: Spring harvested acreage is forecast at 5,800 acres, up 4 percent from 2002. **Harvest of the Florida spring crop is underway. Recent rains and cool weather hurt quality and lowered expected yields.** In Texas, fresh market, or slicer cucumbers continue to decline. However, conditions have been favorable this season.

BELL PEPPERS: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 8,800 acres, up 17 percent from 2002. **Florida had mostly warm and wet weather during March which has promoted good growth and development although it did slow some planting activities.** Texas bell pepper acreage is down due to competition from Mexico.

TOMATOES: Acreage for harvest is forecast at 28,900 acres, up 4 percent from 2002. In California, growers expect a good crop this season. Transplanting of seedlings started in late February and should continue through early April. No pest or disease problems have been reported thus far. **Florida's warm temperatures during February and March helped growth and development. Recent heavy rains reduced yield prospects of some acreage, especially in the Palmetto-Ruskin region.**

WATERMELONS: Acreage intended for harvest is forecast at 42,600 acres, down 1 percent from last year's comparable States. California's melon crop is progressing well with no major problems reported. **Planting in Florida started in late February and early March with picking expected to begin in late May.** Texas weather conditions have remained mild and damage was minimal from the freeze in February.

Vegetables for fresh market, prospective acreage for harvest, spring quarter
by States, 2003 with comparisons

| Selected crops and States | Usual harvest period | Spring acreage | | | 2003 area for harvest as percent of 2002 |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------|------------------------|---|
| | | Harvested | | For harvest 2003 | |
| | | 2001 | 2002 | | |
| | | Acres | | | Percent |
| SNAP BEANS: | | | | | |
| Florida | Apr-Jun | 13,000 | 13,000 | 13,000 | 100 |
| Georgia | Apr-Jun | 9,000 | 9,500 | 8,500 | 89 |
| New Jersey | Jun-Jul | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 100 |
| Total | | 23,500 | 24,000 | 23,000 | 96 |
| CABBAGE: | | | | | |
| Florida | Apr-Jun | 2,000 | 2,000 | 1,800 | 90 |
| Georgia | Apr-Jun | 4,200 | 3,400 | 3,600 | 106 |
| New Jersey | May-Aug | 1,000 | 1,100 | 1,100 | 100 |
| Texas | Apr-Jun | 1,000 | 600 | 700 | 117 |
| Total | | 8,200 | 7,100 | 7,200 | 101 |
| SWEET CORN: | | | | | |
| Florida ^{1/} | Apr-Jul | 25,600 | 26,000 | 26,000 | 100 |
| California | Apr-Jun | 10,500 | 11,000 | 12,000 | 109 |
| Total | | 36,100 | 37,000 | 38,000 | 103 |
| CUCUMBERS: | | | | | |
| Florida | Apr-Jun | 3,800 | 4,000 | 4,500 | 113 |
| South Carolina | May-Aug | 1,100 | 1,200 | 1,000 | 83 |
| Texas | Apr-Jun | 300 | 400 | 300 | 75 |
| Total | | 5,200 | 5,600 | 5,800 | 104 |
| EGGPLANT: | | | | | |
| Florida ^{2/} | Apr-Jun | 400 | -- | -- | -- |
| BELL PEPPERS: ^{1/} | | | | | |
| Florida | Apr-Jul | 6,800 | 7,000 | 8,400 | 120 |
| Texas | Apr-Jun | 400 | 500 | 400 | 80 |
| Total | | 7,200 | 7,500 | 8,800 | 117 |
| TOMATOES: | | | | | |
| Florida | Apr-Jun | 16,500 | 17,000 | 18,000 | 106 |
| California | Apr-Jun | 7,000 | 7,700 | 7,300 | 95 |
| South Carolina | May-Aug | 3,200 | 3,100 | 3,600 | 116 |
| Total | | 26,700 | 27,800 | 28,900 | 104 |
| WATERMELON: | | | | | |
| Florida | Apr-Jul | 24,000 | 23,000 | 23,000 | 100 |
| Arizona ^{3/} | May-Jul | 5,100 | 5,100 | -- | -- |
| California | Apr-Jun | 2,800 | 2,900 | 3,100 | 106 |
| Texas | Apr-Jun | 22,000 | 17,000 | 16,500 | 97 |
| Total | | 53,900 | 48,000 | 42,600 | 89 |
| TOTAL OF CROPS LISTED | | | | | |
| Florida | | 92,100 | 92,000 | 94,700 | 103 |
| United States | | 161,200 | 157,000 | 154,300 | 98 |
| TOTAL OF CROPS ESTIMATED | | | | | |
| United States ^{4/} | | 304,400 | 297,200 | 295,900 | 100 |

^{1/} Includes fresh market and processing.
^{2/} Seasonal estimate discontinued in 2002.
^{3/} Seasonal estimate discontinued. Estimate to be published in January 2004 annual.
^{4/} Total of crops listed plus broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, escarole, head lettuce, cantaloups, and honeydew melons.